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IGNATIAN DIFFICULTIES

AND

HISTORIC DOUBTS:

A LETTER

TO THE
VERY REV. THE DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH.



BY
ROBERT C. JENKINS, M.A.,

RECTOR AND VICAR OF LYMINGE, HON. CANON OF CANTERBURY, AND HON. CURATOR OF
THE LIBRARY OF LAMBETH PALACE.

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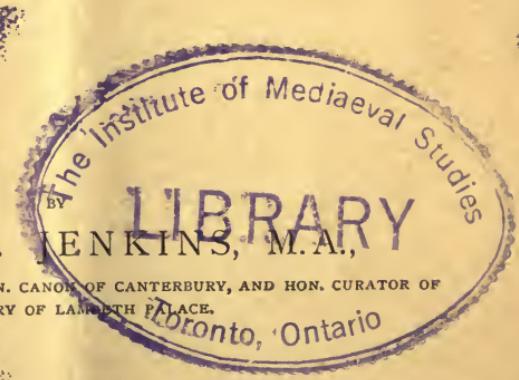
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IGNATIAN DIFFICULTIES AND HISTORIC DOUBTS.

MY DEAR MR. DEAN,

It may, perhaps, seem inopportune, if not venturesome, to disturb the great calm of acquiescence with which the advocacy of Bishop Lightfoot in behalf of the Medicean version of the Epistles of Ignatius has been received, and the *Causa finita est* proclaimed over a controversy of centuries. But (as Bossuet observes on those words of triumph), “*Finita quidem est, ubi aperta quaestio et ubique consensus-finita vero non est, magnis altercationum nebulis involuta*”—The clouds which have gathered over these letters from the first, however illuminated by the electric lights of learning and eloquence, have never been dispersed. The question is, and ever must be, *magnis altercationum nebulis involuta*. Among the learned, both in Germany and England, the question is still an open one. The learned and accomplished Professor, Dr. Richard Lipsius of Jena, whose treatise on the first Epistle of Clement (published in 1855) is known to all students of the Apostolic Fathers, in a recent letter writes to me: “I am still fully convinced that the form of these

letters (which embraces the seven) cannot possibly be derived from Ignatius. The learned and acute (*scharfsinnige*) performance of the much-lamented Bishop Lightfoot has not altered my judgment in this respect. I agree with you fully in the view that the representation of the power of the bishops is incompatible with a writing of the second century." We have here the matured judgment of a divine, as far removed from the teaching of the Tübingen school as the Bishop himself, and whose study of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers began still earlier than his, and has probably been more continuous. It cannot be expected that any new documentary evidence, such as is daily discovered in the domain of modern history, can throw a fresh light upon the history of the primitive Church, involved as it is in the gloom of three centuries of conflict and persecution. The oldest of our ecclesiastical historians could only gather up a few fragments of its earlier records, and many of these are not trustworthy. The notices we find in the Apologists give little help to the student who desires to obtain a clear view of the external and internal state of the Church while it was passing through alternations of persecution and toleration into the stage of endowment, and finally reaching the dignity of an established faith—a dignity too dearly bought by the sacrifice of the peace and simplicity which constituted its best and most precious inheritance. Among the earliest documents referred to, and in one or two brief

sentences cited, by these ante-Nicene writers, are the letters of Ignatius, of which the earliest notice in the Eastern Church is that of Origen, and in the Western that of Irenæus. The two passages of the former writer are in his preface to the Canticles and in his Sixth Homily on St. Luke. In the former place he merely records the famous saying of Ignatius, *Meus amor crucifixus est*; and adds: "I do not think him worthy of blame for this." In the latter he writes: "I have found it elegantly expressed in the letter of a certain martyr (I mean Ignatius, the second Bishop of Antioch after Peter, who in the persecution encountered the wild beasts at Rome),* 'The virginity of Mary was hidden from the prince of this world.' Irenæus' words are these: 'As one of our people (*quidam de nostris*) said: I am the grain of Christ, and am ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may become the pure bread of God.' "†

From these incidental references to the martyr we are led to the belief that his sayings had been traditionally handed down to his followers, and first assumed a written form at their hands. And this view is confirmed by a reference in St. Athanasius' writings,‡ in which, after quoting a passage on our Lord's nature from Irenæus, he adds a corroborative

* The parenthetical passage has every appearance of a marginal note transferred to the text. The subsequent identification of the "certain martyr" has certainly an anomalous character.

† L. V, c. xxiii.

‡ *De Synodis Arimini et Seluciae Ep.*

extract from “certain teachers after Ignatius” (*τινὲς τῶν μετὰ Ἰγνάτιον διδασκάλοι*). His mention of these teachers collectively, without giving any intimation of their names, or saying why he thus associated them with Ignatius, tends to corroborate our views that the disciples of the martyr may have been also the *rédacteurs* of his Letters. The passage quoted from their writings is not a little suggestive, for it alters and reduces to an orthodox form that very doubtful passage of the Ignatian Letters which describes our Lord as *γεννητὸς καὶ αγέννητος*—an Arian formula which St. Athanasius always denounces, and St. Basil declares that none of the Saints ever used.*

It must be admitted by all alike, that in the ante-Nicene writers we see the famous Ignatian Epistles in a very incipient stage. Origen mentions a single letter, but does not say to whom it was addressed; the other allusions are to sayings traditionally handed down, which must have been recorded and reduced to an epistolary form much later. Professor Lipsius believes that this edition of them could not have been earlier than the year 180—more than seventy years after Ignatius’ death. After Athanasius we have the well-known quotations from Ignatius of Theodorit, and the panegyrical oration of St. Chrysostom. The former are in great disagreement with the text of the Medicean MS., which is admitted even by its advocates to be very much

* *Adv. Eunom.*, l. iv.

corrupted in many places ; while St. Chrysostom's account of the journey of the martyr from Antioch to Rome, during which he was in the charge of men whom he describes as wild beasts, places his composition of seven letters to seven distant churches rather in the light of a miracle than an ordinary event. St. Chrysostom records his sayings and doings during his journey, but makes no mention of his letters. He congratulates the faithful of Antioch on the possession of his relics, but says nothing of his literary remains. After these fifth century writers a long and profound silence appears to have fallen on the Church in regard to the Ignatian Letters, which, if their authenticity had then been fully recognised, would have been esteemed the most precious of the original documents of primitive Christianity. The fourth and fifth centuries were eminently the age of controversies, councils, and doctrinal and episcopal conflicts ; yet in none of these do we find any mention whatever of the Ignatian Letters. Had they been produced at Nice, the Arians would have been confounded by the constant and emphatic assertions they make of the *Homöousios*. Had they been produced at Ephesus, the high episcopal doctrine they contain would have proved the independence of the Church of Cyprus, and obviated the necessity of its appeal to the Council. If they had been alleged at Chalcedon, every passage in them which denounces the heresy of the Docetæ would have told with tenfold force against the monophysism

of Eutyches. Not a single controversy which arose during the Middle Ages could have failed to receive illustration or solution from the body of doctrine they contain. What a powerful argument would Lanfranc have had against Berengarius, in the famous passage* which, four centuries later, William of Wideford discovered in Ignatius' Letters, of which a Latin version had in the meantime found its way to England! Like the "Seven Sleepers", the seven Ignatian Letters had fallen into a state of inanition until the critical energies of Usher and Pearson called them back to life, and the great and endless controversy on their authority, and even authenticity, was opened in the learned world. This received an irresistible impulse from the discovery of the Medicane MS., in which the old interpolated version of the letters was reduced to less than half, leaving the strong passages on the almost pontifical authority of the Episcopate in all their integrity, standing out in higher relief, and obtaining an unnatural prominence through the very slenderness of their new setting. Unhappily, this resuscitation of an almost forgotten work fell at a period when the bitter controversy on Episcopacy was at its height, and the letters, instead of being judged critically and on their merits, were viewed in the misleading and treacherous light of a conflict which has been carried on to our own day without Christian edification or practical result. Yet, of all the doctrines presented in the Ignatian

* On the Eucharist.

Epistles, that on the Episcopate is the most exaggerated and the most repulsive. Already our great Milton had denounced it with that peculiar eloquence which belongs to his theological writings, and shown its diametrical opposition to the teaching of the Apostles. "No Pope," he exclaims, "can desire more than Ignatius attributes to every bishop."* And we might well assert that no Christian bishop could ever claim as much. Dr. Virschl, Professor of Divinity at Passau, in his treatise on the theology of Ignatius,† promises a supplementary essay, to establish upon it the primacy and supremacy of the Popes. Dr. Rothe, a great advocate of the Ignatian Letters, thus sums up the Ignatian teaching: "The bishops are the immediate plenipotentiaries and organs of Christ and God. In them Christ has (so to speak) multiplied Himself; in them He has, within the sphere of Christianity, a visible, perceptible omnipresence."‡

He derives this statement from the following passages:—

"We are to 'follow the bishop as Christ followeth the Father'." (*Ad Smyrn.*, c. viii.)

"We cannot be subject to God unless we are subject to the 'bishop'." (*Ad Ephes.*, c. v.)

"We ought to know God and the bishop." (*Ibid.*)

* On Prelatical Episcopacy.

† *Die Theologie des hl. Ignatius* (Passau, 1867), p. 22.

‡ *V. Ueber den Ursprung des Episcopats*, von Dr. Ferd. Chr. Baur. Tübingen, 1838.

“The bishop is to be to us in the place of God, and we ought to regard him as the Lord himself.” (*Ad Ephes.*, c. vi.)

“We ought to do nothing without the bishop.” (*Ad Philadelph.*, c. vii.)

“We should ‘regard the bishop as the Father.’” Another reading is, “As the image or type of the Father”. (*Ad Trall.*, c. iii.)

“No baptism or Eucharist is valid unless celebrated by the bishop.” (*Ad Smyrn.*)

“No assembly of the Church is legitimate without him.” (*Ibid.*)

“All who belong to God and Christ are with the bishop.” (*Ad Philadelph.*)

“We are to concur in the opinion or judgment of the bishop.” (*Ad Ephes.*)

“Whatever the bishop approves, that is approved by God.” (*Ad Smyrn.*)

“He who honours the bishop is honoured by God.” (*Ibid.*)

“Attend to the bishop as God attends to you.” (*Ad Polyc.*)

“The bishop presides in the place of God.” (*Ad Magnes.*)

“When you subject yourselves to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, you seem to me to live not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (*Ad Trall.*, c. ii.)

These are the principal features of the Ignatian doctrine on the Episcopate, and we cannot fail to conclude from them that the “visible perceptible omnipresence of Christ” in a special order of men must concentrate itself at last in an individual, and who can that individual be but the Pope, whose claim to be its exclusive manifestation Dr. Virschl has promised us to establish? And unless we are to have “gods many and lords many”, as many Churches and forms of Christianity as there are bishops, we may well take refuge in the Papacy as the lesser of the two evils.

I. The first difficulty which presents itself in regard to the Episcopal passages is the fact that no necessity or even occasion could have arisen for them at this early period. The assertion of a jurisdiction so absolute and autocratic in its character as to efface every other, or at least to render it powerless, could only arise from the refusal to submit to a constituted authority, and almost assumes the outbreak of an actual rebellion against it. But no question had arisen or could arise at this time on the relations between one order or another in the Christian body. The differences between the followers of Paul and Apollos and Cephas in the Apostolic Church, were not differences of jurisdiction or authority, but of doctrinal predilection ; and the settlement of them once for all by the great Apostle removed the last pretext from those who had thus divided the flock of Christ. And no controversy on the relative authority of bishops and presbyters, or on the obedience due to them, arose before the period of Aerius (A.D. 330-60), whose views on the Episcopate were mixed up with his Arian doctrine : a suggestive fact, reminding us that the Ignatian Epistles are apparently designed to meet both these heresies. If we apply to them the same test that has been applied to other documents claiming an early origin and an eminent authorship—as, for instance, to the Athanasian Creed, which anticipates the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches—we cannot fail to relegate them to some later age in which

a necessity for them had arisen—unless we assign to the writer a gift of prophecy. An evident consciousness of this difficulty appears in the Epistle to the Philadelphians. “Some may suspect”, it runs, “that I say this as foreseeing the schisms of some of you”; and then the writer calls God to witness that he “did not receive from flesh and blood, but by the revelation of the Spirit, the words, ‘Without the bishop do nothing.’” It is hard to believe in a revelation where there could be no necessity for it, and the passage must appear to every intelligent reader to be the excuse of a later writer for inserting an anachronism.

II. Nor less significant is the silence of the defenders of Episcopacy when it first became a subject of controversy. Is it credible that so overwhelming a testimony in its behalf would have been unknown to Epiphanius when he was opposing the Aerian doctrine? Had he known of the evidence given by the great Martyr of Antioch, surely he would have alleged it and reduced his adversaries to silence. But not only does the great hæresiologist fail to produce this overpowering testimony; he even volunteers an account of the origin of the Episcopate which plainly contradicts it. He alleges that many smaller churches were fully constituted without bishops, and with only a presbytery. But if the Ignatian rule to “do nothing without the bishop” were carried out in these churches, they would have been literally under an interdict.

Public services, sacraments, and every ordinance of Christianity must have ceased among them. Yet we cannot doubt that Epiphanius, who had certainly read more than most of his contemporaries, must have known something of Ignatius and his letters. Surely, then, the Episcopal passages could have had no place in his version of them, and must belong to a later interpolation. In equally profound ignorance must St. Jerome have been of these passages, for else he could have never penned that wise advice to bishops and presbyters: “*Sicut presbyteri sciunt se ex ecclesiae consuetudine ei qui sibi praepositus fuerit esse subjectos—ita Episcopi noverint se magis consuetudine quam dispositionis Dominicae veritate Presbyteris esse majores.*”* He was strangely ignorant of the almost deification of the Episcopate which the Ignatian Epistles exhibit, and even of its divine institution, although he is among the earliest of those who make clear mention of the writings of the Martyr. No less ignorant of this doctrine was St. Chrysostom, the panegyrist of Ignatius. For he describes the Episcopate rather as a usurpation than as an apostolic institution—as a “mounting up into power” by a successful assertion of a higher jurisdiction over the presbytery of the church.†

III. But the comparison between the first Epistle of Clement and those of Ignatius must convince the unprejudiced reader that the episcopal passages

* *Hieronymin Tit.*, i.

† *V. Ziegler, de Episcopis*, p. 47.

belong rather to what the German historians call the “higher diocesan period” than to a primitive age. We must remember that the period between the Clementine and Ignatian letters is not supposed to exceed twenty years. Yet in the letter of Clement, Dr. Baur has shown incontestably, and Dr. Lipsius proves to a demonstration, that there were only two orders in the Church—the bishop *or* presbyter, and the deacon. The latter writer, after stating his reasons at length, concludes thus: “By all these reasons, it appears to me that I have sufficiently demonstrated that the Epistle of Clement makes no difference between bishops and presbyters. Only two heads of the Church are distinguished from each other, bishops *or* presbyters and deacons.”* Is it credible—is it, we might even say, possible, that during the short period of twenty years, years of persecution and tumult, the Episcopate could not only have been separated from the Presbyterate, but could have developed almost into a Pontificate? Some indeed imagine that they see the first stage at least of this development in the “new order and arrangement” (*νεωτερικὴ τάξις*) which we read of in the Epistle to the Magnesians. But this rather points to the new law of Christianity by which the Jewish *respectus parentelæ* was in some cases set aside, and young men, as in the case of Timothy, placed above their elders—a change which led the Apostle to address that charge to his son in the faith, “Rebuke

* *De Clemente Rom. Ep. Disquisitio*, p. 30. Lips., 1855.

not an elder, but entreat him as a brother," and at the same time to assert his authority in the words, "Let none despise thy youth." The whole passage points in this direction, and merely amplifies the charge of the Apostle. In the interpolated letter (which often has a better reading in the passages common to both versions) the term in question does not appear.

iv. We appeal next to the teaching of the Western Church in every age and place, which identifies the Presbyterate with the Episcopate *in order*, and declares their distinction to be only *in degree*. The Episcopate confers no new *character* (as the schoolmen phrase it), and adds nothing in respect of order to those who are elected to the office. It is rather an extension and an enlargement of the jurisdiction the bishop already had as a priest, in order to enable him to fulfil certain additional offices, none of them, however, so elevated or distinctive as those of the priesthood. The great work of Morinus (the highest Roman authority), *de Ordinationibus sacris*, proves this at great length and with perfect success.* And when we remember that the Apostolate itself was imperfect until the power of celebrating the last and most distinctive rite of Christianity was conferred upon it in the Last Supper, we can hardly imagine that any function higher than that of the priesthood can belong to the Episcopate. Even in ordination the concurrence

* Pars iii, pp. 31-50.

and co-operation of the priesthood is an indispensable condition ; and in the consecration of Pope Pelagius I, a presbyter of Ostia was associated with the two officiating bishops and became the third of the consecrators. It is not easy to see how the doctrine of Ignatius can be reconciled with this first principle of the teaching of the Western Church in every period, or how the autocratic rule he assigns to the bishop can harmonise with the far more limited powers it possessed in later ages.

v. The assumption of a kind of apostolic authority over various churches beyond his jurisdiction cannot but strike the reader of the Ignatian Epistles as a strange anticipation of the patriarchal authority conferred in later days upon the Church of Antioch. Had he been bishop of Rome instead, the Papal advocates would have had good ground for pleading the *jurisdictio præveniens et concurrens* of their Master in every diocese. Nor can we fail to observe that while the Epistles of St. Paul, and even that of Clement, were occasioned by important questions or grave emergencies, these, on the contrary, are general pastoral letters having no such necessity to plead. They constitute therefore an irregularity and intrusion which place them in great contrast with the letters of the Apostles to the Churches of their plantation, and exhibit a strange neglect of those “fixed boundaries” of jurisdiction which we find mentioned (though by a manifest anachronism) in the Epistle to the Ephesians. We are led to

ask why the zeal of the writer is so exclusively directed to other churches than his own? Why does he not dictate a letter to his own Church of Antioch? This neglect must have appeared to the composer of the spurious letter to the people of Antioch, in which there is much excellent exhortation, and a more primitive doctrine than in the letters which claim authenticity.

vi. Dr. Baur has pointed out the very suspicious resemblance which the Episcopal passages of the Ignatian Letters bear to one another as an indication of their later introduction. There is a strange family likeness between them, and sometimes even an identity of expression, which cannot but strike even the least critical reader. The only Epistle which rises to the dignity and grandeur of the position of the Martyr at this time is that to the Romans, in which, in the presence of far higher truths and in the prospect of an immediate reunion with the "great Shepherd and Bishop of souls", he loses sight of the earthly ministers of Christ, and this leading idea, the *leit-motiv* of his earlier letters, passes away from his mind. In all the rest there is, so to speak, a kind of ringing of the changes upon a certain number of sentences, which are ever so introduced as to disturb the context and to be out of harmony with the general doctrine of the Epistle. The whole aspect of the letters from this standpoint inspires the idea that the passages in question were the glosses of a later period which found their way into the

text, introduced with the object of establishing a full-grown hierarchy in the apostolic age: a suggestion which is rendered the more probable by the fact that the spurious Epistle to the people of Antioch carries on the hierarchical development to its latest date by bringing into it "subdeacons, readers, singers, gate-keepers, exorcists, and confessors". The forged decretal Epistles present the same feature and indicate the same design. We may here observe that the editor of the Epistle to Polycarp, forgetting that he is addressing a bishop, calls upon him to attend to the bishop (*i.e.*, to himself) as God "does to him". His obedience to God resolves itself therefore into an obedience to himself.

vii. But of all the difficulties which present themselves to the reader of the Ignatian Letters, the greatest perhaps is that arising out of the conflict of doctrine which runs almost through every page. Two conflicting and incongruous elements meet us everywhere, which may be thus described:—

(a) The Episcopal, or rather Pontifical element, which merging the individual in the community, the Christian disciple in the Church, delivers him into the hands of the bishop to be moved and moulded by him (in the language of another Ignatius) as though he were a lifeless object—a corpse—*tanquam si cadaver esset*. The autocracy of the bishop is to extend even to the thoughts and opinions of those under him. He is to be to them in the place of God and Christ. Nothing is to be done without

him. They are to know him as they know God. He is to be to them as the type or image of God, a kind of present Deity.

In this teaching the doctrines of grace can have no place; the right of private judgment is extinguished. We recognise, as though born out of due season, the theory of the Papacy, and the *Voluntas Pontificis pro lege*, of which the great and good Cardinal Contarini exclaimed, “Facessat, Deum immortalem precor, a Christianis hominibus haec impia doctrina.”* In correspondence with this high pontifical doctrine we mark the introduction of the terms proper to a sacrificial priesthood: *ἱερεὺς*, *θυσιαστηρὶον*—which latter term in the ages of persecution was reserved for the heathen altar, and only at a later period was employed of the Christian one. In the canons of one of the earliest Councils, that of Ancyra, the word *θυσία* is used of the former sacrifice, and *προσφορά* of the latter, and the contrast is carefully preserved.

(b) In direct opposition to this element in the letters is the doctrine which we may term the Evangelical one, which asserts the presence of Christ in every believer, not so much through the indwelling of the Spirit, for (as Dr. Virschl observes) there is comparatively very little mention of the Spirit in a personal sense in Ignatius,† but rather in that mystical and internal union, which he ex-

* *De Potest. Pontif. ad Paul.*, iii. (Florent., 1558), p. 37.

† *Die Theologie des hl. Ignatius*, p. 8.

presses by the notion of carrying about Christ in our own persons, becoming *Deiferi*, *Christiferi*, *Sanctiferi*. In his discourse with Trajan, given in the narrative of his martyrdom, he declares that he "bears Christ in his bosom"; and refers to the prophecy as true of all Christians, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." Consistently with this view, though very inconsistently with the former one, he bids us to hear Christ, to obey Christ, "not to listen to anyone save Jesus Christ." There is here no limitation of the presence and power of Christ to the Episcopate, no contraction of the "visible, perceptible omnipresence" within the sphere of the "immediate plenipotentiaries and organs of Christ." We are not told to go to the bishop as an intermediary in this following of Christ, or to derive from him the presence and the power which is here made perfectly independent of him. It seems as though the Pontifical spirit of Rome and the private spirit of Protestantism met and contended with one another in the same page. At one moment we are told to obey Christ only, at another to obey the bishop in thought as well as word and work, and to regard him as God and Christ.*

A similar conflict, though of greatly inferior im-

* It is sad to note the doctrinal consanguinity of these latter injunctions with the claims of the recent Popes in the close of their Bulls. The Bull "Ineffabilis" asserts the same power over the very thoughts of Christians which Ignatius is here supposed to claim for every separate bishop.

portance, discovers itself between the purely Episcopal passages—those which give to the bishop alone the representation of God and Christ, and those in which he is associated in this supreme authority with the presbyters and even the deacons. It is as though an absolute monarchy and a constitutional one had been advocated at the same moment—a jurisdiction centred in an individual and at the same time extended and diffused to a whole order. It never seems to the writer possible that the bishop and his presbyters might disagree, and he represents them accordingly, as a harp and its strings, ever in exquisite harmony—a similitude which was a very favourite one with the Montanists and their prophetesses. Yet the recent tumults in the Church of Corinth, not to speak of the difference between the Apostles themselves, proved it to be too probable that the harp might get out of tune, and this celestial harmony be very seriously disturbed.

VIII. Finally—and this is not the least important of the reasons which induce us to hold with Dr. Lipsius the view that “the representation of the power of the bishops” in Ignatius’ Letters “is incompatible with a writing belonging to the beginning of the second century”—we affirm that the pictures of the primitive Church given us by Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and (though last, not least) the recently discovered *Διδαχὴ*, are incapable of being brought into the most

distant reconciliation with that which the Ignatian Epistles place before us. There is not a single figure in them which recalls the image of Christianity as its early apologists have represented it. This contrast must appear most conspicuously to all who remember their beautiful and simple descriptions of the earliest Christian assemblies and the primitive Christian teachers. All these we should have to surrender if we could accept the strange theory that a hierarchy closely resembling that of the Jewish Church had suddenly sprung up to supersede it ; and that the Christian worship, instead of growing up out of the synagogue, had sprung from the Temple. One of the most learned writers of modern times, both in civil and ecclesiastical matters, Giannone, whom the great Lord Mansfield placed in the highest rank of historians, and whose *History of Naples* is a masterpiece of learning and judgment, in a work he planned on the three kingdoms, "Earthly, Heavenly, and Papal," writes thus of the early state of Christianity :—" The Apostles and their successors propagated the Gospel in the provinces of the East through the Synagogues which they found established after the dispersion of the Jews in many cities of the East. From this their churches began, in regard to their external polity, to give the superintendence to one of their ministers, and adopted the same form as that presented by the Synagogues. This superintendence and inspection given to one of the priests, who was simply the

head of the Presbytery, degenerated soon into domination, and from a persuasive became a coercive power." This change, however, belonged to a much later age than that of Ignatius, and the power he attributes to the bishop too nearly approaches to that *domination* which is here asserted, to enable us to admit his letters as the true representation of the Church of his own age. It is, and must ever be, an almost insuperable difficulty in regard to this inquiry that we have three distinct versions of the Epistles —the Syriac, which is without the Episcopal passages, and is regarded by the Medicean advocates as a reduction and abbreviation of the text; the Medicean version, which contains the passages on the Episcopate, but does not greatly extend the other portions of the text; and lastly, the large interpolated version which Morinus and his brother critics maintained to be the full and proper text, of which they held the Medicean copy to be itself a reduction. Almost exactly the same fate has happened to the records of the Papacy. We have of these also a threefold version — the Liberian, or original Catalogue, the second catalogue, and the catalogue as it appears in the larger work attributed to Anastasius Bibliothecarius and other Vatican scribes. The first catalogue, like the Syriac Ignatius, is very brief and simple, scarcely recording more than the names and dates of the successive Pontiffs; the second adds a number of other circumstances; while the third contains

elaborate details of their lives and works, and bears the same proportion to the first and second as the interpolated Ignatius does to his Syriac and Medicean forms.* The fact is a curious one, whatever ideas it may suggest to our minds. If (as Dr. Lipsius thinks) the Syriac version is a reduction of a fuller text, we must nevertheless conclude that the editor of it did not attach much weight to the episcopal passages, even if he knew them. But no conclusion we can arrive at on this point can assist us in rehabilitating the Medicean version, or establishing it as the only true text. It is very probable that many other versions of the celebrated letters may yet be found in the East, and that the controversy may be reopened on new ground. In any case, the value of the Ignatian Letters is seriously diminished by the doubts which must be thus multiplied, and we may be induced to adopt the conclusion of Milton, "Had God ever intended that we should have sought any part of useful instruction from Ignatius, doubtless He would not have so ill provided for our knowledge as to send him to our hands in this broken and disjointed plight."

I have ventured to submit these difficulties to your better judgment, my dear Mr. Dean, from having been for more than fifty years a student of the Ignatian Letters, during which I have been led to form and mature my own opinion in regard to

* *V. Bianchini Praef. in Vit. PP. Rom. Anast. Bibl. Ed. Vatican., tom. i, sect. xi.*

them, without being drawn into the vortex of the long controversies which have arisen out of them. The kind of special pleading which they have occasioned has so greatly tended to disturb the calm and unprejudiced judgment of them, that I have endeavoured to read them as any intelligent layman might, without any regard to the contending parties who were fighting rather for or against Episcopacy than for or against the authenticity of the letters themselves. The recent attempt to establish their authority has met hitherto with no response, the *Causa finita est* remains as yet unchallenged. It is difficult to account for this apathy, which seems to assign merely to a learned and lamented authority the position of a final court of appeal. But "he who stands alone in the contest" (as the Russian Primate Isidore said in the Council of Florence) "may seem to have the victory; and he who disputes alone without a respondent may seem to speak unanswerably." I venture not to claim in any sense the *rôle* of a respondent, but rather to put before you a few of the difficulties which prevent me from regarding the cause as finished, or accepting the *Roma locuta est* as closing this conflict of centuries. With these apologetic words, believe me to remain, with great respect,

Sincerely yours,

ROBERT C. JENKINS.

LYMINGE,

Easter Tuesday, 1890.

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